

FRENCH INDO-CHINA

we will avenge the injuries inflicted on him and
will die for him. The conflict
will be long, but we are acting in accordance
with the laws of Heaven, and
our cause must triumph. . . .¹

These were not vain words, the Admiral commented.
Never did a people
prolong their resistance in such great distress.

Unfortunately for the future reputation of Annamite
nationalism its
pure heroism was mixed with the dross of piracy and
brigandage. The
issue became hopelessly confused: the French
confounded patriot with
pirate, mandarins confounded all native Christians
with French parti-
sans, Chinese soldiers sent by their government to
Tonkin turned
private bandits once in the country. Less cruelty,
deceit, and disunity
on the Annamite side, and more understanding and
clemency on the
part of the French, could have cut the struggle short.
As the French
conquered province after province, the Annamites more
and more took
refuge in passive isolation* Instead of uniting on some
plan of resistance
they burned incense before the ancestral altar,
trusting in the spirits
to deliver them.

Typical of this attitude was the experience of the
first Frenchman
to visit the Hue palace. Wandering through a maze of
gardens and
passages he was finally led to a room, where he saw
the Emperor Tu-
Duc on his knees before a bamboo partition. For only a
brief moment
this screen was rolled up to reveal the aged Empress in
her yellow robes,
her face like old ivory. This was the supreme and
ineffectual concession
old Annam made to the sacrilege of European curiosity
and the new
order. A rare exception was the great mandarin, Phan
Thanh Quang,
who appreciated the reality of the conquest. To save
what was left of
the provinces he administered he made peace with the
French, but to
punish himself for being the instrument of the

inevitable he committed
suicide in the miserable hut which had been his home
even in the days
of his grandeur. Few of the old Annamites had his vision
and his cour-
age: if they could not oppose the West they were
determined to ignore it.

The financial burdens, characteristic of the Doumer era,
awakened the
native masses to a consciousness of their collective
misery. They were
ripe for the growing wave of excitement that flooded
Asia as a result
of the Sino-Japanese War, the Boxer Rebellion, the
occupation of the
Philippines, the Japanese victory over Russia, and the
Chinese Revolution.
In 1906 occurred the first reaction to Asiatic
unrest of the Indo-
Chinese—the Gilbert Giieu conspiracy. From Japan
Prince Cuong De
wrote letters in blood to urge his compatriots to
prepare themselves to

¹ Garros, G.» *Portugais Annamites* (Paris, 1936), p. 83.